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ABSTRACT

Because the United States is a largely patriarchical society, and because women and men are socialized differentially in that society, a recognition of the social, political, and economic realities of women is essential in understanding their professional development. External factors that are more likely to impinge on the career paths of female rather than male counseling psychologists include sex discrimination in educational and occupational settings: the availability of role models and mentors: associational ties with colleagues: sex as status: and public policy. Internal factors involve achievement orientation, expectancy of success, and personal belief systems about the rights and roles of women and men and individual responsibility. Professional women must develop a strong sense of self, recognize the reality of the situation, and develop support systems and a sense of competency. (Author/NRB)

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Presentation: WOMEN IN COUNSELING: FACTORS IMPINGING ON THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS

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The career paths of female counseling psychologists, like those of their male counterparts, are influenced by developmental, family life cycle, and situational factors as well as by the four psychological processes described by Harren and Randers--achievement orientation, mentor relationships, time orientation, and self-other orientation. As Neugarten (1976) points out, however, historical settings and social contexts are also cruical to considerations of life histories in career pathways, Because contemporary women are living in a largely partriarchical society, and because women and men are socialized differentially in our society, an understanding of the social, political, and economic realities of women is essential to discussions of their professional development.

Females constitute less than one-tenth of the faculty at prestigious academic institutions and continue to be concentrated in the lower academic ranks (Laws & Tangri, 1979). Female students are typically less successful in attaining graduate degrees than are male students, even though the ability differences between them for the most part favors women (Hirshberg & Itkin, 1978). Finally, within our own division of APA (Division 17), women constitute less than 25% of the membership and infrequently appear in positions of leadership such as president of the division.

As these data suggest, despite a number of similarities in the adult development of female and male counseling psychologists, a number of factors differentially impact their career pathways. This paper will address the nature and influence of factors that are more likely to impinge on the career paths of women professions in our field than on male professionals. Key internal or psychological factors, and key external or structural factors in the developmental and family life cycles of women professionals will be identified, and relevant situational variables will be considered

Let us turn first to the external or structural factors. I have selected several for discussion today: sex discrimination in educational and occupational settings, the availability of role models and mentors, associational ties with colleagues, sex as status, and public policy. Let me note before beginning that there is considerable overlap among these external factors and that the external factors often interact with the internal factors I will describe later in my talk. Also because I work in an academic setting as an assistant professor many of the examples and sources of data come from research on women in academia. Let me also say that I do not expect you to agree with my interpretation of the material to be presented.

When we talk of sex discrimination in hiring and promotion, we often hear the question--but where are the qualified women? The Committee on the Education and Employment of Women in Science and Engineering of the National Research Council, in a report published in 1979, found them. Statistics on women PhD's and their male counterparts in selected disciplines of the natural science, social sciences, and engineering confirm what we know to be the case regarding status of women in academe: they are predominately found as postdocs,

lecturers, or assistant professors--and they receive lower salaries at all levels of attainment than men of comparable status. Moreover fewer women are employed at first rank universities. A crucial point made clear by the results of the survey is that women earn their PhD's in the same study time and at similar institutions as men--and usually exhibit better academic records than men. Also they aspire to careers in teaching and research in equal proportions to men (Skinner, 1980). Thus one factor that impinges on the career path of women in counseling psychology, and not on males', is that their acceptance and promotion may be based on factors more related to their gender than to their ability.

A second external factor is the availability of role models and the accessibility to mentors. Since females constitute less than 10% of the faculty at first-rate academic institutions where the majority of female counseling psychologists receive their professional training, few female role models are available to them. Data from a recent study we conducted at The University of Texas support the importance of same-sex role models in graduate students' professional development (Gilbert, Gallessich, & Evans, 1980). Female graduate students identifying female professors as role models viewed themselves as more career-oriented, confident, and instrumental than did female students identifying male role models. (There were no differences on these variables between males indentifying male role models and females identifying female role models.) Whether interactions with female and male faculty directly influenced these students self-reports of competency and achievement remains to be seen. However, it seems likely that female faculty provide example of achievement and success and of alternate lifestyles. Also, female faculty may be more likely to

unambiguously encourage, challenge, and support female students' academic pursuits. Male faculty may be more likely than female faculty to hold less liberal views about the roles of women and may view them as less career-committed. Also, sexual attraction of fear of sexual attraction may influence the nature of the interaction of male faculty with female students (Pope, Levenson, & Schover, 1979). The fact that sexual relations between students faculty occur to the degree that they do--and apparently are an accepted occurrence within academic departments of psychology--makes this possible factor all the more salient. Should these factors be operating, female students may feel less comfortable and receive less professional support and intellectual challenges from male faculty than from female faculty. Similar dynamics could operate in professional settings.

An interesting issue emerges here--one which I view as an example of the interaction between the internal and external factors that impinge on females' career paths. The psychological burden of disapproval, indifference, and discomfort that women experience in their graduate training and professional settings may undermine their commitment to professional careers, dampen their spirits and energy, and contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies about not being able to make it in a "man's world" (Epstein, 1978). Further confounding this situation is the external reality provided by our societal norms--women can "drop out" without much, if any, negative social sanctions to pay. In fact, this "out" provided by society may contribute significantly to conflicts women experience within their student or professional roles, potentially resulting in their prematurely putting their career goals aside or lowering their sights because they think they cannot succeed. Data reported by

Hirshberger and Itkin (1978) are consistent with this hypothesis: male graduate students were found to be more successful in attaining graduate degrees than were female students, even though the ability difference between them for the most part favored women.

Turning now to mentors, there is no doubt that the mentor process has by and large been unavailable to women professionals. In view of the key role that Levinson (1978) and others find mentors to have in the professional development of men, this lack of access for women places them at a distinct disadvantage. According to Levinson, the mentor may act as a teacher to enhance the young man's skills or intellectual development. As a sponsor, he may use his influence to promote the young man's entry and advancement. Basically, however, the mentor helps the mentee believe in himself so that his Dream can be realized. As you may recall, Harren and Randers discuss this relationship at length and mention three reasons why it has been a predominately male phenomenon: males being in higher positions, male proteges being more assertive in initiating a mentoring relationship, and the potential of cross-gender relationships to become sexual. These three factors are fascinating if one thinks about them in terms of power and maintaining the status quo. Why should cross-gender relationships with male professionals 8 to 15 years our senior become sexual? Quite possibly, one way to keep a woman in "her place" is to make her "sex object" characteristics salient in interactions with her. Similarly one could argue that if a woman professional was as assertive as a male in establishing a mentor relationship, her intentions could be (unconsciously) misconstrued by the older male as having sexual overtures. Here again, then, we see a vast difference in factors influencing the career development of men and women.

In fact, women professionals learn very early in their careers that the quickest way to be "deskilled" by a male is by eroticism. We talk about our research findings and they comment on our lovely smile or our shining eyes. So we learn to keep talking and to ignore attempts to make the interaction sexual with the hope that they will take our work seriously. Let me quote here from my role model (and wished mentor) Jessie Bernard. She says (1976a, p. 216) "How does it happen that norms can persist over long periods of time without any recognition on the part of those who conform to them that there is anything inconsistent or even dysfunctional in the situation. How does it happen that the victims of any status quo tolerate it so long and so patiently?" and that certain pheonomena are considered as part of the social order rather than as a harmful structural defect.

A third and related structural barrier concerns the social organization of collegial ties. With whom do females and males interact in their professional environments and how open is the male buddy or old boy system to female peers? Several studies indicate (e.g., Kaufman, 1978) that women are isolated from these informal collegial contacts and that such isolation, whether by choice or exclusion, may leave women at a professional disadvantage. This sort of isolation may be a form of the "stag effect" (Bernard, 1976b). According to Jessie Bernard "the stag effect is the result of a complex of exclusionary customs, practices, attitudes, conventions, and other social forms which protect the male turf from the intrusion of women" (p. 23). Thus female professionals may receive less encouragement or simply be avoided by their male colleagues.

The fourth external factor fits in well here--sex as status. The psychological literature clearly documents differential evaluation on the basis of gender. The male, for example, is rated higher than the "equivalent"

female in such areas as task performance (e.g., Deaux & Emswiller, 1974), speaking effectiveness (Gruber & Gaebelein, 1979) and job qualifications (Etaugh & Kasley, in press). And as was already noted, female professionals receive lower recognition and economic rewards than males. Also, lower pretige, knowledge, and expertise are attributed to them (Bayer & Astin, 1975). I should add that the differential evaluation of men and women not only influences decisions about ability and achievement. Female-related activities and topics are also devalued (Gilbert, Lee, & Chiddix, in press; Gruber & Gaebelein, 1979). A too frequent example of this in academia is the difficulty in receiving tenure experienced by women faculty who build their scholarly research around women's issues or the psychology of women. A number of such young scholars have been counseled (and probably rightly so in terms of the reality) to "stay away from these areas" or to "play them down" in their annual reports to their academic departments. Feedback often received from their departments is that their research interests are too narrow and/or not scholarly.

The final structural barrier to be considered is social policy. The reason for including this factor will become more clear when I discuss the internal or psychological factors impinging on the career pathways of female counseling psychologists. Social policy is, of course, related to the discriminatory policies in hiring that were mentioned earlier and to the status differential between the genders. Another important aspect of social policy is child care. Historically, women have assumed the responsibility for child rearing. Thus, social policy that ignores the need for high quality community-based facilities for child care would clearly impact professional women more than men.

Five internal factors will be briefly discussed. The first concerns the influence of sex-role socialization patterns on developmental stages and the socialization of sex differences--an area well researched by Jean Block. Block (1973) argues that in the fourth or conformity level of ego development, both genders develop a set of sex-role stereotypes that conform to the culturally approved definitions of male and female roles--the male stereotype focusing on the development of a sense of agency and the female stereotype on the development of a sense of community. Agency is manifested in separation, mastery, and self-assertion; communion is manifested in fusion, intimacy, and acceptance. In the fifth, or conscientious level of ego development, societal norms are internalized and the ability to introspect and evaluate oneself against an abstract standard is developed. Finally, in the sixth or autonomous level an integration occurs between the two opposing forces of human development--agency and communion. In this sixth stage, however, the socialization process has a differential effect such that the required integration becomes more difficult to attain for women than for men.

As we heard in the paper by Harren and Randers, the fully functioning, self-actualized male moves through a self-other orientation. Society allows this process for men so that with age and experience they can become more communal and expansive and less interested in personal rewards and self-serving achievement. Females, on the other hand, are expected to be homogeneous and consistant across their life cycle. Thus the attainment of higher levels of ego functioning for them involves conflicts with prevailing cultural norms. I mention this in way of a general introduction to a number of more specific variables that have been investigated by researchers concerned with the professional development of women (Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980; Leary, 1974; Lenney, 1977; Stein & Baily, 1973).

The first of these is achievement orientation. According to Harren and Randers, achieving a sense of competence is necessary for the change from extrinsic to intinsic motivation ot occur. This change parallels what Block describes in the sixth stage of ego development. What would differentially impact the development of this sense of competence in women?

A number of writers (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1980; Stein & Bailey, 1973) have noted that women's achievement behavior is inhibited and circumscribed by the effects of sex-role socialization. The available literature indicates that women are expected to perform less well than men on a variety of achievement tasks (O'Leary, 1977). Even when a woman's achievement is acknowledged, however, her success is generally attributed to luck or effort--and not to her ability. Women may internalize the stereotypic assumption that competence and achievement are incompatible with femininity or with their being desired as a woman. Thus they may perceive the consequences of occupational advancement as a loss of companionship and family. Although this is not necessarily true, a large proportion of professional women are unmarried. I will say more about this later.

Another factor is expectancy of success--the belief of what I can do. Across various areas of achievement females tend to hold lower expectations of what they can and do accomplish. A telling example of this comes from a study on the performance, attitudes, and professional socialization of women in academia (Widom & Burke, 1978). Junior faculty at two prestigious universities were surveyed regarding their objective job performance, self-perceptions, and self-evaluations. Males generally felt that they were above average in comparison to their colleagues and contemporaries, and showed a fairly accurate

appraisal of their standing vis-a-vis others on the publication dimension. In contrast, females rated themselves significantly lower than the males in comparison to others and saw themselves as rating much lower on the publication dimension than they actually did, indicating a marked lack of correspondence between their perceptions and their actual standing. Belief in personal responsibility is another key area. Females generally hold themselves more responsible for failure and often do not recognize the structural factors operating beyond the individual level.

Another very important area concerns personal belief systems about the rights and roles of women. There is no doubt that women in our society are socialized to take primary responsibility for child-rearing. The effects of this socialization is well-documented in the literature on role conflict experienced by married professional women who are pursuing careers. These studies show that women experience considerably greater stress, conflict, and overload than their spouses because their roles have changed appreciably more than those of their spouses. Despite the talk of egalitarian role relations, very little evidence of this exists in the literature. Thus parenting typically has a far greater impact on the career paths of women counseling psychologists than on that of their male peers. Men have always assumed that they would combine a career with a family; the assumption for women has been a career until a family occurred--if a career at all. The impact of this implicit assumption is seen in the lower marriage rate among female professionals in comparisons to males (25% versus 75%) and in the choice a number of professional women feel they have to make between a career and a child.

I have outlined and discussed briefly a number of factors which are likely to impinge on the career paths of women counseling psychologists. Being a counseling psychologist myself who is very concerned about the professional advancement of my sisters, I would like to close with two recommendations. First, as women we need to recognize and differentiate the the internal and external aspects of our professional experience both at the societal level and within ourselves. External factors include employer's perceptions and attitudes about women, job flexibility should you be a member of a dual-career family, the quality of child care should you be a parent, sexual discrimination, etc. Relevant internal factors are self-concidence, attitudes about life roles, and degree of career commitment. Second, we need to recognize the relationship between sociological and psychological factors. That is, we need to learn to differentiate between what we have been taught and accepted as socially appropriate for us from what might actually be appropriate.

Let me give a new examples to make this process more clear. Suppose you receive feedback that your research areas are too narrow or that your work is too focused on the concerns of women. Or that you must be feeling insecure in your professional role because you are working so hard and producing so much. Or that you are too involved in your work and are not smiling enough around the office. Or suppose that no one in your department or office ever asks you about what you are doing professionally. One very appropriate reaction in such situations is anger and disappointment. At the same time one needs to sort out the internal from the external--what aspects of the feedback or situation reflect

inadequate responses and skills or poor judgment on your part and what aspects stem from sources in the environment such as people feeling threatened by your ability, people wanting you to conform to the societal stereotype for women, or colleagues simply not being interested in your professional work. Whatever the reasons, we need to develop a strong sense of self, to recognize the objective reality and stop blaming ourselves, and to develop our own support systems so that we can continue to develop a sense of competency across our life cycle.

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